BUDGET 2005

Environmental Assessment Office

SERVICE PLAN 2005/06 – 2007/08

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Message from the Minister and Accountability Statement

I am pleased to present the Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan 2005/06 – 2007/08. The purpose of this plan is to facilitate the public's understanding of the core business of the Environmental Assessment Office, the resources it employs, and its expected results.

The Environmental Assessment Office plays an important role in British Columbia by delivering a thorough, timely and integrated environmental assessment process. It promotes the provincial goal of sustainability by protecting the environment and fostering a strong and vibrant economy.

Recent reforms to the environmental assessment process to streamline and customize review procedures are continuing to demonstrate increased business and industry confidence. More proponents are entering the process as the economy expands and new provincial timelines are providing increased process certainty. The Environmental Assessment Office continues to place a high priority on ensuring harmonized reviews when both the federal and provincial environmental assessment processes apply.

The plan indicates clear goals, objectives, and strategies for the Environmental Assessment Office to meet the performance measures shown.

The 2005/06 – 2007/08 Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan was prepared in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 31, 2005 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.

George Abbott

Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management and
Minister Responsible for the Environmental Assessment Office

January 31, 2005

105-04472/

Ministry Overview and Core Business Areas

The Environmental Assessment Office leads reviews of proposed large-scale projects in British Columbia. Environmental assessment is a process for identifying, predicting, evaluating and mitigating potentially significant adverse impacts of major projects. The process examines a broad range of possible effects — environmental, economic, social, health and heritage — and supports balanced decision making.

The core functions of the Environmental Assessment Office form the basis for fulfilling its mandated responsibilities. The resources for the core business areas are provided on the following page. These core functions are delivered through two business areas:

Major Project Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Office oversees and manages the province's major project environmental review process to assess environmental, economic, social and other aspects of proposed projects in the following sectors: industrial, mining, energy, water management (dams, dykes, and reservoirs), waste disposal, food processing, transportation and tourism (destination resorts).

Corporate Operations

Many of the Environmental Assessment Office's corporate services are shared with the Ministries of Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection. Corporate operations that are the responsibility of the Environmental Assessment Office include service planning, budgeting, staff development, policy and legislation, records management, and management of the electronic Project Information Centre and website. Resources for corporate operations are rolled into the core business for the Major Project Environmental Assessment.

The number of reviewable projects has nearly tripled compared to levels expected when the Service Plan and budget were first developed in 2001. The new Act and reforms to streamline the environmental assessment process are providing greater process efficiencies for the Environmental Assessment Office and other provincial agencies. However, even with these greater process efficiencies the Environmental Assessment Office requires additional resources (budget and FTEs) to handle this significant increase in workload. These reforms are also ensuring that British Columbia maintains a fair and balanced process that is competitive with other jurisdictions.

Some of the major projects currently under review include the Richmond Airport Vancouver (RAV) Line, Galore Creek Gold/Silver/Copper Project, Delta Port Third Berth, and the Whistler Nordic Centre. The Environmental Assessment Office has 13 mining projects in the pre-application or application stage of review.

Resource Summary

The table below shows the budgeted resources for the Environmental Assessment Office's two core business areas.

Core Business Areas	2004/05 Restated Estimates[1]	2005/06 Estimates	2006/07 Plan	2007/08 Plan
Operating Expenses ($000)				
Major project environmental assessments	2,820[2]	4,480[3]	4,380	4,380
Corporate operations	Rolled into core business item 1			
Total	**2,820**	**4,480**	**4,380**	**4,380**
Full-time Equivalents (Direct FTEs)				
FTEs	29	34	34	34
Total	**29**	**34**	**34**	**34**
Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) ($000)				
Corporate operations	70	62	62	62
Total	**70**	**62**	**62**	**62**

[1] These amounts have been restated, for comparative purposes only, to be consistent with the presentation of the *2005/06 Estimates*.
[2] Internal and External recoveries provided an additional $630,000.
[3] EAO has received an increase of $1.660 million above its 2004/05 base budget to find the resources required to sustain the current project review volumes (almost 3 times what they were anticipated to be).

Vision, Mission, Principles and Values

Vision

Sustainable economic development that reflects the social, cultural and environmental values of British Columbians.

Mission

Provide British Columbians with a well-designed and well-delivered environmental assessment process that reflects the government's objectives for economic growth, strong communities and sustainable resource management, based on maintaining high environmental standards.

Principles

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided by the following principles:

1. ***Neutrality*** — Neutrally and centrally administered process.
2. ***Fairness*** — Fair and open process.
3. ***Balance*** — Decisions are based on impartial, balanced and informed recommendations.
4. ***Science-based decision making*** — Best available information, knowledge and technologies are considered and utilized.
5. ***Consultative*** — Participatory and transparent, ensuring meaningful opportunities for public and First Nations input.
6. ***Inter-jurisdictional coordination*** — Streamlined process minimizing duplication and overlap.

Values

The Environmental Assessment Office is guided in its organizational behaviour by the following values:

- cooperation and teamwork;
- respect for the values and opinions of others;
- continuous improvement to ensure quality service;
- a professional and high-performance culture, encouraging innovation and creativity;
- a healthy workplace supporting staff development, recognition, and opportunity; and
- accountability to the people of British Columbia.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

This section presents the Environmental Assessment Office's goals and outlines how specific objectives, strategies, performance measures and targets are helping to achieve these goals. The diagram below displays government strategic goals, Environmental Assessment Office's mission, goals, objectives and performance measures, and indicates their linkage.

Government Strategic Goals	Ministry Goals	Ministry Objectives	Performance Measures/Indicators
	Ministry Mission Sustainable economic development that reflects the social, cultural and environmental values of British Columbians.		
A strong and vibrant provincial economy. Safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment.	1. Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment.	1. Continual Improvement of Provincial Environmental Assessment.	→ Duration of review of the application by government.
			→ Proponent's level of satisfaction with the review process. — EA review is focused on key issues. — Issues and conclusions were fairly reported in the EAO Assessment Report.
			→ Percentage of EA applications accepted for formal review without significant revisions.
			→ Deregulation: reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation.
		2. Enhance federal/ provincial cooperation to increase timeliness and certainty, and minimize overlap and duplication.	→ Percentage of harmonized reviews that meet provincial timelines.
	2. Organizational Excellence.	1. Support organizational development to optimize ability to deliver environmental assessment.	→ Internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with new environmental assessment direction.
			→ Percentage of staff with Employee Performance and Development Plans (EPDP) in place.
		2. Communicate effectively with all stakeholders.	→ Timely posting of public and agency comments on the EAO's Project Information Centre (ePIC).

Goal 1: *Efficient and Effective Delivery of Environmental Assessment.*

This goal will be met through two objectives — continual improvement of provincial environmental assessment and greater procedural certainty when both the provincial and federal review processes are triggered. The objectives and targets outlined in this section are based on planned expenditures and staffing levels. Achievement of the objectives and targets may be affected by unpredictable external factors, such as number of projects which are outside the control of the Environmental Assessment Office. Some will depend on the direct, constructive engagement of proponents, the public and First Nations.

Core Business Area: *Major Project Environmental Assessments.*

Objective 1: *Continual Improvement of Provincial Environmental Assessment.*

Improvements to environmental assessment are ongoing. Beginning with the implementation of the new Act in December 2002, the Environmental Assessment Office has undertaken major reforms to the environmental assessment process:

- from a prescriptive and standardized process to a flexible and customized process that can be tailored to the specific needs of the project;
- from a process that places a heavy administrative burden on ministries to a process that reduces government's administrative burden and reduces costs;
- from a process that could be quite lengthy to a shorter overall review process that places greater responsibility on proponent deliverables; and
- from a process that provided little flexibility in determining which projects would be reviewed to a process that provides more flexibility in designating projects as reviewable.

Key Strategies include: delivering a timely and cost-efficient provincial environmental assessment process; evaluating the environmental assessment process, and refining it based on implementation experience to deliver a timely and cost-efficient process; aligning environmental assessment and permitting/licensing requirements to achieve greater process certainty; fulfilling government's legal obligations towards First Nations; and applying Enterprise-Wide Risk Management (ERM) to Environmental Assessment Office key strategies by implementing ERM program activities.

Performance Measures[1]:

The Environmental Assessment Office is working to ensure the delivery of a timely and cost-efficient environmental assessment process. Four performance measures are used to demonstrate progress in this area.

[1] The following Performance Measures have been dropped from the 2005/06 - 2007/08 Service Plan: Stage of enterprise-wide risk management implementation and average annual cost of project environmental assessment. The Environmental Assessment Office will continue to apply formal risk management strategies to its operations and the measure is no longer needed. Average annual cost of environmental assessment was determined from experience not to be a good measure due to its sensitivity to the project workload and is not under the control of the Environmental Assessment Office.

Duration of review of the application by government: One key objective of environmental assessment is timeliness as a measure of process certainty. The British Columbia environmental assessment process has legislated timelines and the Environmental Assessment Office monitors whether these timelines are being met. The Environmental Assessment Office is proactive in anticipating and scheduling activities and encouraging effort, for example, consultation during the pre-application stage, to ensure that projects stay on track to meet schedules and stay within legislated timelines.

Proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process: The Environmental Assessment Office relies on surveys of proponents to provide feedback on the environmental assessment process to determine where improvements are needed. The survey of proponents will be repeated every two years and will apply to all proponents in various stages of the review. The findings of the Environmental Assessment Office Client Survey (2004) are being reviewed to identify areas for improvement that will be reported in the 2004/05 Environmental Assessment Office Annual Service Plan Report.

Percentage of EA Applications accepted for formal review without significant revisions (Effectiveness of EAO's efforts in managing projects during the pre application stage.): The EAO is working with proponents during the pre application stage to ensure issues are being addressed appropriately to facilitate a timely and effective application stage of review. This effort by the EAO should result in a more complete and thorough application document prepared by proponents including attention to environmental protection and other government standards. Having a more complete, higher quality application allows EAO to process applications within 180 days. This measure which focuses on the "screening of the application" stage will demonstrate whether a high percentage of proponents applications are acceptable for formal review without significant revisions. This would reflect a high degree of leadership by the EAO as well as commitment and effort by proponents during the pre application stage to ensure issues have been identified and measures included to address any adverse effects.

Deregulation: reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation: The Government of British Columbia has met and exceeded its target for reducing red tape for the three year period ending June 2004. In 2002/03 the Environmental Assessment Office reduced regulations by 56 per cent from the previous year which more than exceeded the Environmental Assessment Office's target of 33 per cent. The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to maintain or reduce the level of regulation set in 2002/03.

Performance Measures	2004/05 Actual/Base	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target
Duration of government application review.	90% of British Columbia Environmental Assessment process application reviews completed in 180 days.[1]	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.
Proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process. • EA review is focused on key issues • Issues and conclusions were fairly reported in the EAO Assessment Report.	Continual process improvement based on feedback from proponents and identification of key issues in the 2003/04 survey results.[2]	Improve proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process.	Improve proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process. New survey to be conducted to evaluate proponent experiences with improvements in 2005/06.	Improve proponents' level of satisfaction with the review process. Continual process improvement based on feedback from proponents and identification of key issues in the 2005/06 survey to be undertaken.
Percentage of EA Applications accepted for formal review without significant revisions.	Baseline (to be determined).	Improve over baseline.	To be determined.	To be determined.
Deregulation: reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation.	56% reduction in regulatory requirements of provincial environmental assessment.	Zero per cent increase.	Zero per cent increase.	Zero per cent increase.

[1] Base data for 2004/05 is incomplete but it is assumed that target will be achieved. Projects included in this measure are reviewed under the British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act* only and do not include harmonized reviews with the federal government.

[2] Survey conducted to evaluate proponents experience in the review process for the 2003/04 period and earlier.

Objective 2: *Enhance federal/provincial cooperation to increase timeliness and certainty, and minimize overlap and duplication.*

When a project is subject to both the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* as well as the British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act*, the Environmental Assessment Office works closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and other federal agencies to ensure the requirements of both levels of government are met through a single harmonized process. Under the Canada/British Columbia Agreement for Environmental Assessment Cooperation signed by both governments in March 2004, the requirements of both processes are met through a single coordinated assessment to minimize duplication and overlap. Work plans, signed off by the Environmental Assessment Office and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, are developed for each project requiring a harmonized review. They set out the project-specific procedures for completing a harmonized review, which includes scope of project, scope of assessment and project review schedule.

Performance Measures:

Per cent of harmonized reviews that meet provincial timelines: The purpose of work planning and other measures undertaken as part of harmonization is to increase the likelihood that provincial timelines will be achieved by both levels of government. It is difficult to ensure that all projects undergoing a review under both processes will proceed at the same rate. The federal review process has unique requirements that make it difficult to proceed in tandem in all cases. The Environmental Assessment Office and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency try to anticipate and resolve problems through the Environmental Assessment Office/Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Harmonization Working Group. This performance measure will demonstrate whether the majority of harmonized projects are meeting provincial timelines.

Performance Measure	2004/05 Actual/Base	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target
Per cent of harmonized reviews that meet provincial timelines.	80% of all harmonized reviews meet provincial timelines.[1]	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.

[1] Base data is incomplete, however it is assumed target will be achieved. Harmonized reviews include those projects undergoing a review under both the British Columbia and Canadian EA processes.

Goal 2: *Organizational Excellence.*

This goal is achieved by ensuring that the Environmental Assessment Office supports organizational development to optimize its ability to provide efficient and effective delivery of environmental assessment. It also entails ensuring effective and efficient communication with all parties involved in environmental assessment.

Core Business Area: *Corporate.*

Objective 1: *Support organizational development to optimize ability to deliver environmental assessment.*

This objective focuses on creating a healthy, performance-focused environment with proactive leadership and continuous improvement.

Key strategies include: evaluating existing Environmental Assessment Office policies to identify gaps and redundancies; developing innovative approaches to managing the environmental assessment process; continuing learning opportunities for staff to remain current on government's legal obligations to First Nations in order to manage the process and provide advice to proponents on building and maintaining positive relationships with First Nations; reviewing Employee Performance and Development Plans annually with all staff; and providing opportunities for staff training, development, recognition and succession.

Performance Measures:

Internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with new environmental assessment direction: The Environmental Assessment Office has established policies and procedures to guide the province's environmental assessment process to ensure consistency and provide process certainty for clients. For example, the Guide to the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Process published in March 2003 sets out policies and procedures. With almost two years of experience conducting assessments under the new British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act*, policies and procedures need to be re-evaluated and refined to ensure that they enable the most efficient and effective process consistent with the new legislation. This performance measure tracks the progress in ensuring that internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with the new environmental assessment direction approved by government.

Per cent of staff with Employee Performance and Development Plans: Achieving the objective of efficient program management, fiscal responsibility and client service requires Environmental Assessment Office staff to develop performance and development goals for themselves that will enable them to contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives. All Environmental Assessment Office staff has Employee Performance and

Development Plans (EPDP) in place as of 2004 and plans are reviewed and updated during the year. The Employee Performance and Development Plan identifies employee accountabilities and linkages with the Environmental Assessment Office Service Plan and sets out staff training and other opportunities for staff development.

Performance Measures	2004/05 Actual/Base	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target
Internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with new environmental assessment direction.	100% of identified gaps and redundancies addressed.	100%	100%	100%
Per cent of staff with *Employee Performance and Development Plans.*	100%	100%	100%	100%

Objective 2: *Communicate effectively with all stakeholders.*

The British Columbia *Environmental Assessment Act* establishes an electronic Project Information Centre (ePIC) to facilitate access to general information about the environmental assessment process, as well as specific information on individual project assessments. The principal means of accessing the Project Information Centre is through the Environmental Assessment Office website. The Public Consultation Policy Regulation identifies documentation related to each project environmental assessment that is normally made available to the public through the website. Information on the Project Information Centre is updated on an ongoing basis. The Environmental Assessment Office is committed to improving the access and ease of use of the website since this is the primary mechanism for access to information.

Performance Measure:

The performance measure under this objective assesses the Environmental Assessment Office's effectiveness in communicating with stakeholders.

Timely posting of public and agency comments on the EAO's Project Information Centre (ePIC): It is the policy of the Environmental Assessment Office that the records generated for the purposes of the assessment of a reviewable project are made accessible to the public through the Project Information Centre. The types of records to be posted are listed in the Public Consultation Policy Regulation. This performance measure tracks the Environmental Assessment Office's success in posting records in a timely manner.

Performance Measure	2004/05 Actual/Base	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target
Timely posting of public and agency comments on the EAO's Project Information Centre (ePIC).	All project documentation required by regulation will be posted on ePIC within 7 days of receipt by EAO.	Maintain.	Maintain.	Maintain.

Related Initiatives and Planning Processes

Deregulation and Regulatory Reform

The table below lists the Environmental Assessment Office's most significant deregulation and regulatory reform initiatives that aim to ensure British Columbia's regulatory climate enables economic development while maintaining environmental standards.

Objectives	Performance Measures	2004/05 Actual/Base	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target	2007/08 Target
Shift from prescriptive to results-based approach to regulation.	Internal policies and procedures are relevant and consistent with new environmental assessment direction.	100% of identified gaps and redundancies addressed.	100%	100%	100%
Streamlined environmental assessment process.	Duration of review of the application by government.	90% of application reviews completed in 180 days.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.	Maintain or improve.
Zero per cent increase to regulatory burden throughout 2007/08.	Deregulation: Reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation.	June 2004 baseline (262).	Zero per cent increase.	Zero per cent increase.	Zero per cent increase.

Overviews of Human Resource Plan and Information Resource Management Plan

Human Resource Management Plan

The Human Resource Management Plan overview is available by accessing the following website:
http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/publicat/hrmp-05-06/information-resource-management-plan.pdf.

Information Resource Management Plan

The Information Resource Management Plan is available by accessing the following website:
http://www.eao.gov.bc.ca/publicat/irmp-05-06/information-resource-management-plan.pdf.